

1. Relics in the Pāli Tipiṭaka

“Relic,” according to the gigantic Oxford English Dictionary (CD Version from 2009), is

“Some object, such as a part of the body or clothing, an article of personal use, or the like, which remains as a memorial of a departed saint, martyr, or other holy person, and as such is carefully preserved and held in esteem or veneration.”

In Theravāda Buddhism there is a very big emphasis on ‘relics’ of the Buddha and His enlightened disciples of any times. The most important mention about relics of the Buddha is right there where we may expect them – in the Sutta of the Buddha’s Passing Away, namely the *Parinibbāna Sutta*.

“5.10. ‘Lord, what shall we do with the Tathāgata’s remains (*sarīre*)?’ ‘Do not worry yourselves about the funeral arrangements, Ānanda. You should strive for the highest goal, devote yourselves to the highest goal, and dwell with your minds tirelessly, zealously, devoted to the highest goal. There are wise Khattiyas, Brahmins and householders who are devoted to the Tathāgata: they will take care of the funeral.’

5.11. ‘But, Lord, what are we to do with the Tathāgata’s remains (*sarīre*)?’ ‘Ānanda, they should be dealt with like the remains of a wheel-turning monarch.’ ‘And how is that, Lord?’ ‘Ānanda, the remains of a wheel-turning monarch are wrapped in a new linen-cloth. This they wrap in teased cotton wool, and this in a new cloth. Having done this five hundred times each, they enclose the king’s body in an oil-vat of iron, which is covered with another iron pot. Then having made a funeral-pyre of all manner of perfumes they cremate the king’s body, and they raise a stupa at a crossroads. That, Ānanda, is what they do with the remains of a wheel-turning monarch, and they should deal with the Tathāgata’s body (*sarīre*) in the same way. A stupa should be erected at the crossroads for the Tathāgata. And whoever lays wreaths or puts sweet perfumes and colours there with a devout heart, will reap benefit and happiness for a long time.”¹

“6.23. And when the Lord’s body was burnt, what had been skin, under-skin, flesh, sinew, or joint-fluid, all that vanished and not even ashes or dust remained, only the bones remained. Just as when butter or oil is burnt, no ashes or dust remain, so it was with the Lord’s body..., only the bones were left. And all the five hundred garments, even the innermost and the outermost cloth, were burnt up. And when the Lord’s body was burnt up, a shower of water from the sky, and another with burst forth from the sāl-trees extinguished the funeral pyre. And the Mallas of Kusinārā poured perfumed water over it for the same purpose. Then the Mallas honoured the relics (*sarīrāni*) for a week in their

¹ Maurice Walshe, “*The Long Discourses of the Buddha – A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*”, 1995 [first published in 1987], Wisdom Publications, Canada; p.264.

assembly hall, having made a lattice-work of spears and an encircling wall of bows, with dancing, singing, garlands and music.

6.24. And King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha heard that the Lord had passed away at Kusinārā. And he sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā. And he sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā: 'The Lord was a Khattiya and I am a Khattiya. I am worthy to receive a share of the Lord's **remains** (*sarīrānaṃ*). I will make a great stupa for them.'²

There are some more mentions about relics in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* –

Vimānavatthu – 2. *Purisavimānaṃ* - 8. *Anekavaṇṇavimānavatthu*

Original Pāḷi from Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka 4.0, by Vipassana Research Institute, 1995.	English tr. by I.B. Horner. ³
1205. "Na māsi dānaṃ na ca matthi dātuṃ, pare ca kho tattha samādapesiṃ;	8. Not mine was gift for I had nothing to give. But I roused others there:
Pūjetha naṃ pūjaniyassa [pūjaneyyassa (syā. ka.)] <i>dhātuṃ</i> , evaṃ kira saggamito gamissatha.	'Pay homage to that relic of him who is worthy of homage; thus, it is said, you will go hence to heaven.'
1206. "Tadeva kammaṃ kusalaṃ kataṃ mayā, sukhañca dibbaṃ anubhomi attanā;	9. Such was the skilled deed done by me, for which I enjoy deva-like bliss.
Modāmaṃ tidaṣaṇassa majjhe, na tassa puññassa khayampi ajjhaga ⁴ nti.	I rejoice in the midst of the host of the (Three-and-) Thirty for exhaustion of that merit has not (yet) come.

Milindapañhā – 4. *Meṇḍakapañho* - 3. *Paṇāmitavaggo* - 7. *Buddhapūjanapañho*⁴

Original Pāḷi from Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka 4.0, by Vipassana Research Institute, 1995.	English tr. by I.B. Horner. ⁵
"Bhante nāgasena, bhāsitaṃpetam tathāgatena	"Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Tathāgata:
'abyāvaṭā tumhe, ānanda, hotha tathāgatassa <i>sarīrapūjāyā</i> 'ti.	'Do not you, Ānanda, be occupied with honouring the Tathāgata's bodily remains .'
Puna ca bhaṇitaṃ –	And again it was said:
"Pūjetha naṃ pūjaniyassa <i>dhātuṃ</i> ;	'Venerate that relic of him who is to be venerated;
Evaṃ karā saggamito gamissathā ⁴ ti.	By doing so you will go from here to heaven.'

² Ibid. 275.

³ I.B. Horner assisted by N.A. Jayawickrama, *"The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon"*, PTS, Oxford, 2005; p.143.

⁴ This portion is apparently referring to the previous quote from *Vimānavatthu*. Note, that *Milindapañhā* is believed to be composed "before 1st century AC". See more about its historicity here - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menander_I . *Milindapañhā* is often quoted in the Pāḷi Commentaries (which was a 5th century AC translation from much older Sinhalese original. The Sinhalese original is believed to be translation of even more ancient Pāḷi original.)

⁵ I.B. Horner, *"Milinda's Questions"*, Luzac & Company, LTD., London, 1969; vol.1, p.249.

Original Pāli from Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka 4.0, by Vipassana Research Institute, 1995.	English tr. by monk Sarana (according to the verbatim translation of Ashin Jāgara ⁷)
52. "Padumuttaro nāma jino, sabbadhammāna pāragū; Jalivā aggikkhandhova, sambuddho parinibbuto.	52. "The Buddha Padumuttara, who reached the end of all phenomena, The Self-Enlightened Buddha ceased (into Nibbāna), like a blazing heap of fire.
53. "Mahājanā samāgama, pūjayitvā tathāgataṃ; Citam katvāna sukataṃ, sarīraṃ abhiropayum.	53. "Many people gathered, and after making offerings to the Tathāgata (i.e. the Buddha), Made correctly the funeral pyre and placed the (Buddha's) body (there).
54. "Sarīrakiccaṃ katvāna, dhātum tattha samānayum;	54. After the cremation (/After doing the duty of body"), there assembled the relic [in this case, whole the body as one big relic].
55. "Paṭhamā kañcanamayā, dutiyāsi maṇimayā; Tatiyā rūpiyamayā, catutthī phalikāmayā.	55. "First (portion) made of gold, second (portion) was made of rubies. Third (portion) made of silver, fourth was made of crystal.
56. "Tathā [tattha (syā. ka.)] ⁸ pañcamiyā bhūmi [nemi (sī.)], lohitaṅgamayā ahu; Chaṭṭhā masāragallassa, sabbaratanamayūpari.	56. Thus (/There) the fifth portion was made of red ruby-bricks. The sixth of (a kind of) cat's eyes, (and then) topped with all [i.e. the seven kinds of] gems.
57. "Jaṅghā maṇimayā āsi, vedikā ratanamayā; Sabbasoṇṇamayo thūpo, uddham yojanamuggato.	"The foot of the pagoda [i.e. where flowers and lamps are offered) was made of rubies, the columns (made by) lathe made of gems, All of the pagoda (was) covered (/made) of gold, high up one yojana. ⁹

⁶ *Apadāna* is a scripture that is still included in the main collection of Tipiṭaka books (i.e. not a Commentary), but because of its eulogic and supernatural theme, it is often dated as a later scripture. This kind of 'dating' by scholars is however detrimental to these scriptures – they are less read, less studied, and often not translated. *Apadāna* is one of the Pāli scriptures for which there's still (in January 2016) no official translation.

⁷ MoeThi Tike Ashin Jāgara Mahāthera [မိုးထိတိုက် အရှင်ဇာဂရမထေရ်], "Thera-Apadāna Pāli [Verbatim Pāli-Burmese] Nissaya" [ထေရ်အပဒါနပါဠိတော်နိဿယ], Mandalay, 1829 [1200 ME]; p.131-132.

⁸ Although this Pāli Text comes from Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā Tipiṭaka 4 software which takes the Burmese version of Pāli Tipiṭaka as the main source, the Burmese Nissaya mentions *tattha* (being same as the Thai and other version), not *tathā*.

⁹ According to the 22 volumes big Pāli-Myanmar Dictionary, vol. 17, p. 310 (term 'yojana,' ယောဇန), the length may be either 12 miles 5 furlongs 540 feet [20.48221 km] or 8 miles [12.8748 km].

58. "Devā tattha samāgantvā, ekato mantayum tadā; Mayampi thūpaṃ kassāma, lokanāthassa tādino.	"Deities gathered there, and at that time [when the pagoda was finished] discussed together: We will make a pagoda for the Ruler of the World of Such [Qualities].
59. "Dhātu āveṇikā natthi, sarīraṃ ekapiṇḍitaṃ; Imamhi buddhathūpamhi, kassāma kañcukaṃ mayam.	"The Relic is not separated, the body (/Relic) is one piece. On this Buddha-pagoda, we will make a covering.
60. "Devā sattahi ratnehi [sattaratanehi (sī.)], aññāṃ vaḍḍhesu yojanaṃ; Thūpo dviyojanubbedho, timiraṃ byapahanti so.	60. "The deities increased (the pagoda) one more yojana. The pagoda was two yojanas high and in circumference, dispelling [night's] darkness. ¹⁰

The scriptures of Tipiṭaka speak of relic as "sarīra" (literally "body") or "dhātu" (literally "substance"). See that in the case of "body," if there were more relics, the word takes plural – "bodies," showing clearly that relics are meant, not the person's body referring to its previous form. Of course, with accounts about relics in the main scriptures, it is right to expect much larger elaboration in the Commentaries. This however would require a whole book of accounts, because there are not only explanations and stories, but also separate later scriptures that are dedicated just and only to history of a relic or relics (e.g. *Dhātuvam̐sa*, *Dāṭhāvam̐sa*, etc.).

There is also an interesting account about relics in Burmese language, compiled by ven. Paññājota. I have made notes on a paper of it some time in the past, so now you can enjoy them in the typed form.

Notes from 'Problems in Buddha Dhamma' by Dhammadūta Ashin Paññājota; answer 'Relics' (vol.2, p.619-625).

- ❖ Some Burmese people wrongly distinguish 'မ္ဗေတော်' (mway-taw) as relics of the Buddha and 'သတော်' (dhat-taw) as relics of Arahants. U Paññājota explains that the words carry same meaning and that 'dhat-taw' & 'mway-taw' should be used for both the Buddha & Arahants.
- ❖ The 7 'unchanging' relics that were left after the Buddha Gotama attained Parinibbāna are: 4 Teeth, 2 Collar Bones (Clavicles) and Whorl (hair) of His Forehead.
- ❖ The Buddha's relics are of two kinds:
 1. *Avippakiṇṇa* [also called *asambhiṇṇa*] (unchanging, inseparable) – the 7 relics (see above), which will stay in this shape they had during the Buddha's life.
 2. *Vippakiṇṇa* [also called *sambhiṇṇa*] (changeable, divisible) – little relics of different sizes and colors (listed in Commentary on *Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta*, *Khuddaka Pāṭha* 8).

¹⁰ The text continues with various kinds of supernatural beings coming and covering the pagoda in different precious materials, until it became seven yojanas high.

- ❖ According to a verse in *Suttanipāṭa's Khaggavisāṇa Sutta*, *Paccekabuddhas* (self-enlightened, non-teaching 'silent Buddhas') after Parinibbāna always keep their bones together as a skeleton-relic, as one piece, without any other relics.
 - ⇒ This says U Paññājota, maybe because there may be many 'Pacceka Buddhas' together, and because their relics do not have much value when the *Sammā Sambuddha* appears in the world.¹¹
- ❖ There's no mention of character (size, shape) of relics of Arahants or even Chief Disciples (*Aggasāvaka*) of the Buddha, although there is the case of Aññāsi Koṇḍañña, whose body (after cremation in heaven) yielded relics of shape like that of star-ipomoea (*Ipomoea coccinea*)'s bud or jasmine's bud. The Buddha received it from Ven. Anuruddha and deposited it in a miraculously appeared pagoda.¹²
 - ⇒ However, says U Paññājota, size is not mentioned. Hence Arahants may yield various-sized star-ipomoea-bud-shaped relics.
- ❖ U Paññājota explains, that *Paccekabuddhas* leave relics only after they decide for it through their psychic power. Hence Arahants would also leave relics only after they decide for it by psychic power.
 - ⇒ And the *Sukkhavipassaka* (non-*jhānic*) Arahants would therefore leave no relics, because they don't have psychic powers.
- ❖ U Paññājota has himself seen (සිංහලය) how a famous monk was cremated, his bones were then crushed to powder and that was then made in sphere(s) and gelded – to show people as fake relics, saying these are real.

You may find these two links also interesting:

<http://lankapura.com/2008/07/sacred-tooth-relics-lord-buddha/> - see there the photo of the Buddha's relic in Kandy, in Dalada Maligava Temple (Temple of the Tooth Relic), in Sri Lanka.

<http://www.buddha.sg/htm/general/relic.htm> - 40 Tooth Relics, one in Mrauk-U found by the abbot of GPBT, Venerable Shi Fazhao.

¹¹ Some *Sammā Sambuddhas* (e.g. our Buddha Gotama) decide that their body will yield big number of relics – so that many people can take them to their countries and build there pagodas. It is impossible that two or more *Sammā Sambuddhas* would appear at the same time, therefore 'distribution of relics' is reasonable. However, the *Paccekabuddhas* may be many at the same area at the same time, hence they do not make wish that their bodies will yield many relics after they pass away. Also, the *Paccekabuddhas* do not wish to have their relics to be worshipped at the time when the *Sammā Sambuddha* arises in the world – because they want to avoid being worshipped at the time when the *Sammā Sambuddha* can be worshipped.

¹² "Punadvase aruṇuggamanavelāyameva citakaṃ nibbāpetvā *sumanamakuḷavaṇṇānaṃ dhātūnaṃ* parisāvanaṃ pūretvā bhagavati nikkhamitvā *veluvana vihāra koṭṭhakaṃ sampatte āharitvā satthu hatthe ṭhapayimsu. Satthā dhātuparisāvanaṃ gahetvā pathaviyā hatthaṃ pasāresi, mahāpathaviṃ bhinditvā rajatabbubulasadisamaṃ cetiyaṃ nikkhami. Satthā sahatthena cetiye dhātuyo nidhesi. Ajjāpi kira taṃ cetiyaṃ dharatiyevāti."* SNA – *Sagāthāvagga* – 8. *Vaṇṇīsaṃyutta* - 9. *Koṇḍaññasuttavaṇṇanā*.

2. Biographies & Interviews of Bhikkhu Bodhi and Bhikkhu Thānissaro

I have received these two documents from a good friend, as Office documents. You may see them here as PDF:

<https://archive.org/details/BhikkhuThanissaroAjahnGeoffsBiographyAndInterview> - Bh. Thanissaro's biography.

<https://archive.org/details/VenerableBhikkhuBodhiBiographyAndInterview> - Bh. Bodhi's biography.

3. Proverbs vs. Adages

There are two kinds of 'sayings' – proverbs and adages. Although perhaps everybody of you know this already, it will be good to know that in Myanmar language it is not different. Until recently I had a Burmese book about proverbs - မြန်မာစကားပုံ (Myanmar proverbs), but just a few weeks ago I got hold of one more - မြန်မာဆိုရိုးစကား (Myanmar adages). Proverbs are metaphorical and multipurposed, e.g. “ကောက်ညှင်းက မစေး၊ ဆန်ကျမ်းက စေး။” - “The glutinous rice is not sticky, but the raw rice is sticky.” – This means, that a harmed person doesn't feel offended, but his friend/relatives are angry about it (that their relative was harmed).

In case of adages, the saying is direct as to the meaning. For example: “ကဆုန်၊ နယုန် ဆွေဆွေရန်။” - “In Kason (month) and Nayon (month), (you are) hopping mad.” – This means that in these months it's so hot in Myanmar that one is literally hopping on the hot ground.

4. Addressing Famous Monks

A few days ago a Burmese monk shared with me, that the famous Mahagandhāyon Sayadaw is also called Taung-Myo Sayadaw. I was lucky to learn, that Burmese people rarely call a famous and respected sayadaw by their Pali name. Burmese people, out of respect, would not call that sayadaw as “Sayadaw U Janakabhivamsa” (so what to talk about “U Janaka”, as some people use). Burmese people will call him always either as Mahagandhayon Sayadaw or Taung-Myo Sayadaw, which are not his 'names', but rather places where the sayadaw started his career or where he was most prominent. It is similar with Pha Auk Sayadaw (so don't call him Ashin Āciṇṇa), Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw, Yaw Sayadaw (Ashin Sirindābhivamsa), Sitagu Sayadaw, Mingun Sayadaw, 'Pa Chote Sayadaw' (“Professor Sayadaw”, i.e. Sayadaw U Nandamalabhivamsa), Shwe Kyin Sayadaw, Ledi Sayadaw, and many others. We will however see certain exceptions to this rule – which might be so because they have not become sayadaws of a famous monastery established by them e.g. ven. Tejaniya (of Shwe Oo Min Monastery) or ven. Revata (of Pha Auk Monastery).

5. Pali Made Easy and other OCRed Books

I was recently given a scanned version of the excellent Pali course-book, "*Pāli Made Easy*", by a good friend of mine. I have OCRed it with a commercial software donated to me by my generous supporters. You may download it here:

<https://archive.org/details/PaliMadeEasyOCRRed> - Pali Made Easy from ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya.

I have also successfully OCRed these books:

<https://archive.org/details/NibbanaInTheravadaPerspectiveWithSpecialReferenceToBuddhismInBurmaAshinDhammapiaOCRRed> - Nibbana in Theravada Perspective - U Dhammapia, OCRed

<https://archive.org/details/TheMyanmarBuddhistHisLifeFromTheCradleToTheGraveDr.TinHlaingEngAndMMOOCRRed> - The Myanmar Buddhist - His Life from the Cradle to the Grave by Dr. Tin Hlaing

I believe that these are not 'strictly copyrighted', and that they will help you in your studies anyway :-).

6. Burial of Animals

A young sparrow was lying sick on a water tank behind our monastic building. I took it on my talipot-fan and showed it to my friend. He and one more yogi found a monastery worker, who took it and prepared some grains and water. The bird could stay up maybe five more hours. In the afternoon at around 3 o'clock it passed away. – This is very natural, and nothing worth of mentioning. I would like to share with you the fact, that dead animals in Burma are buried in the evening of the day when they passed. This will become important when you challenge other idea, that the animal should be kept one day (night) without burying, so that its 'soul' can easily leave the body. Burmese people do not believe in 'soul', and they don't want to wait until the body becomes stinking.

7. Dying Robes

The general term for robe-dye is "thit-khauk", which is wrongly understood (by non-Burmese) as a king of a tree. That is indeed wrong. "Thit-khauk" means "bark", and there it finishes. It is used to show, that the robe-dye is obtained of a kind of bark. There are three kinds of bark and one kind of fruit that are used for dying.

1. ပိန္နဲသစ်ခေါက် [peinae thit-khauk] = bark of *Artocarpus heterophyllus* (the jackfruit tree, which is most famous source of the dye, and also most resourceful.)
2. ပျဉ်းကတိုးသစ်ခေါက် [pyin-ga-doe thit-khauk] = bark of *Xylia dolabriformis* (a kind of ironwood tree).
3. ဗမာပိတောက်သစ်ခေါက် [bamar padauk thit-khauk] = bark of *Pterocarpus macrocarpus* (a burmese version of gum-kino tree)
4. မလေးရှားပိတောက် အသီး [malesha padauk athee] = fruit of (perhaps) *Pterocarpus dalbergioides* (Andaman red wood).

8. The Glory of Masoyein

Masoyein monastery (မစိုးရိမ်ကျောင်းတိုက်) has been for a century or even more the center of higher monastic education in Mandalay, and still is. When monks and novices gain their lower degree of Ngay and Lat, they may decide to follow Kyi, Dhammācariya, and Abhivamsa in the Masoyein Monastery – which is the institute that bred some of the greatest scholar-monks in Myanmar. Although not everyone gets the chance to get a room there, everybody may visit and attend the classes with a teacher they select, and come back to one's monastery in the afternoon. Such education had also the eldest Tipitakadhara of Myanmar, Yaw Sayadaw, who also attended Masoyein monastery for classes only, and resided in Visuddhayon monastery. Famous monks of Masoyein are Sayadaw U Kesara and Sayadaw U Sūriyābhivamsa. Sayadaw U Sūriyābhivamsa was not only one of the most famous abbots of Masoyein monastery, he was also one of the great monks who attended the Sixth Buddhist Council in Yangon, held in 1954-1956.

Nowadays when Mandalay monks or novices want to get higher monastic education, they select their teacher either in Masoyein, Visuddhayon, or Myadaung monasteries.

9. Does a Buddha image need to be consecrated in some way before it is used?

Unlike in Sri Lanka, where perhaps each Buddha statue should be ritually “opened eyes” (scratching the eyes by knife, in a very complicated religious way), Burmese people believe that a Buddha statue is worth worship already since its making was finished, and do not practice any such ‘eye-opening’ ritual. In many cases it is the Buddha statue is brought home together with eight statues of Arahants, hence the event is called “The event of nine lords” (ဘုရားကိုးဆူပွဲ [phayar koe-hsu bway]). Sayadaw U Vajirapāṇī shared with me, that in Burmese history, when there was war in Thailand, the Burmese king's army saw there is a lot of worship of gods in Thailand. So, the Burmese kings - to avoid such deity worship in Myanmar - have replaced the Thai deities with the Buddha and Arahants, namely the Buddha and eight Arahants including ven. Sāriputta, ven. Moggallāna, ven. Koṇḍañña, ven. Ānanda, ven. Rāhula, ven. Sīvalī, and other. The people invite their relatives, friends, and monks. Monks chant a set of chantings, which is mostly same for this occasion –

- (1) Anekajāti verses (အနေကဇာ ဂါထာ),
- (2) Dependent Origination (ပဋိစ္စသမုပ္ပါဒ် အနုလုံ ပဋိလုံ),
- (3) Yadā Have Pātubhavanti Dhammā verses (ယဒါ ဟဝေ ပါတုဘဝန္တိ ဓမ္မာ),
- (4) the 24 conditions of Paṭṭhāna (၂၄ ပစ္စည်း) and
- (5) a portion of Pubbaṅga Sutta of the 11 main chantings – Jayanto bodhiyā mūle etc. (ဇယန္တောဗောဓိယာ မူလေ).

After this the monks may chant some parts of the 11 sutta chanting (especially Maṅgala, Ratana, and Mettā Suttas), or anything else according to the situation and time. More information should be available in the book “*Sabba-Maṅgala-Dhamma-Desanā*” (သဗ္ဗမင်္ဂလာဓမ္မဒေသနာကျမ်းစာအုပ်).

10. Brené Brown – just some hints for smooth living

Brené Brown is neither a Buddhist, nor she has to do anything with Myanmar. But still, I found her ideas sometimes very helpful, and at times even 'enlightening' in terms of social intelligence. As the Wikipedia article (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bren%C3%A9_Brown) says, "She is the author of two #1 New York Times Bestsellers: *The Gifts of Imperfection* (2010) and *Daring Greatly* (2012)." I especially found interesting her interview "Bravery & Authenticity in a Digital World /w Brené Brown | Chase Jarvis LIVE," available for viewing & listening at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUuXDZERxrk> .

May all beings be happy :-)

Monk Sarana